

Good morning distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, my name is Stefano Signore and I am Head of Unit, Sustainable Energy and Climate Change at the Directorate of Development Cooperation of the European Commission in Brussels. I want to first acknowledge the efforts of the NDC Partnership to capture the momentum, sharpen the focus of Nationally Determined Contributions, and to build coalitions of action around them. I would also like to congratulate the Partnership for sponsoring this Pavilion where no doubt many important conversations are taking place over these two weeks.

On behalf of the European Union's Global Climate Change Alliance Plus Flagship Initiative, I want to welcome you to this discussion on waste management in Africa. The GCCA+ was established in 2008 to build a bridge between the EU and the most vulnerable countries in the world – with whom we shared strong interest in ambitious climate action. Since 2008, the GCCA+ has embodied two phases, the first focused on supporting climate resilience and preparing countries for a new global framework, the second, which began in 2015, even more focused on concrete action and implementing the Paris Agreement. 2020 is the final year of the current phase, and by year's end the GCCA+ will have invested around €750 million in more than 80 climate change programs, mostly in least developed countries and small island developing states – making it one of the most significant sources of climate finance for these countries.

Since the arrival of NDCs as key climate change mechanisms, the GCCA+ has expanded its scope to support mitigation efforts. We know well that developing countries and especially LDCs and SIDS have contributed least to the problem of climate change. But there are important opportunities to pursue mitigation for environmental reasons and crucially for these countries, because of other benefits that can eventuate. Waste is a clear example of a sector in which all countries can contribute to mitigation, while making very significant public health and development gains.

In particular, the waste management is such an intriguing theme for Africa, a continent characterised by higher population growth rates, increasing consumer demands and consumption but very limited and/or embryonic development of waste infrastructure systems.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Fourth Assessment Report linked waste to population, urbanization and affluence. Highlighting this point, the scientific committee drew on the words of archaeologist E.W. Haury who said 'Whichever way one views the mounds [of waste], as garbage piles to avoid, or as symbols of a way of life, they can give the real dimension and impact of the problem better than any others<sup>1</sup>'.

Indeed, as African countries experience economic growth, increased population and rapid urbanization – inadequate waste management has become a constant thorn in their sides. Current reasons include poor organizational structures; lack of appropriate skills; inadequate budgets; weak legislation; lack of enforcement; low public awareness; corruption; conflict; political instability; and lack of political will.

With social and economic transformation taking place across the continent, and exploding populations, cities are becoming more urbanized and consumer purchasing habits are rapidly changing. These phenomena imply growth in waste generation, especially at the city and local levels. With large numbers of the population moving to cities to seek better life opportunities, additional burdens are placed on public and private sector waste services and infrastructure that is already barely working.

Despite the challenges a new wind is blowing for waste management in Africa and this breath of fresh air comes from cities, from municipalities, from local governments, better positioned to tackle such a problem as working in direct contact with local private SMEs, NGOs and citizens working together for a better and safer environment.

Our speakers today will present the challenges being faced at national and at local levels to develop a safer and more sustainable waste approach as a way to build sustainable and liveable cities.

Unfortunately, the speakers will not be able to showcase a silver bullet to solve this issue, but they are extremely proud of demonstrating how, despite all the budget, financial, regulatory and capacity building constraints, they are managing to deal with this huge theme where operating essential municipal service requires more and more integrated systems that are efficient, sustainable, and socially supported.

The Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development (DG DEVCO) believes that sharing real stories, concrete stories from the field, told by those who are in charge of implementing concrete actions, provides an insight into the possibility of overcoming these problems. Through the development of collaborative governance processes different stakeholders can be brought together to develop and implement more inclusive strategies. The Commission through the GCCA+ mandate, is working hard to ease the management of waste issues in Africa and this side event is a clear example of the importance of sharing regional and sub-regional approaches, information and experiences as a way to sensitize other States that need to be supported in this difficult domain.

We hope you enjoy the discussions.